UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.1
4 January 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: CHINESE, ENGLISH,
FRENCH AND RUSSIAN

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences

Addendum

Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific adopted by the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, held at Jakarta from 7 to 14 June 1994

* E/CN.6/1995/1.

95-00267 (E) 200195 230195

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JAKARTA DECLARATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The participants in the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, having met in Jakarta from 7 to 14 June 1994, have reviewed and appraised the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi in 1985, and prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace to be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995;

Reaffirming their commitment to the provisions contained in the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international conventions and instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

Recognizing the national competence of all countries to formulate, adopt and implement their respective policies on the advancement of women, mindful of their cultures, values and traditions, as well as their social, economic and political conditions;

Emphasizing the importance of the empowerment of women as a cornerstone of sustainable development and the strategic role of women as agents and beneficiaries of development and in the alleviation of poverty;

Aiming at achieving the full realization of the advancement of women as equal partners with men, in the family and society, based on a harmonious and mutually beneficial partnership between men and women;

Aiming also at enhancing women's full involvement and active participation in policy- and decision-making processes at all stages;

Desirous of promoting and protecting the human rights of women at all stages of their life cycle;

Noting with appreciation the efforts and progress made by the members and associate members of ESCAP to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, reaffirmed in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, their commitment and leadership shown in the creation and implementation of programmes to meet these objectives, and the significant contribution made by non-governmental organizations, particularly grass-roots, social development and professional women's organizations, research and higher educational institutions;

Acknowledging efforts at the subregional level to create frameworks for the advancement of women, such as the Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, the Pacific Platform for Action: Rethinking Sustainable Development for Pacific Women towards the Year 2000, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Perspective with regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women;

Noting further the invaluable contributions of donor countries, multilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations in providing technical and financial assistance for women in development programmes;

Having reaffirmed the principles to which we are committed, pledge our efforts towards the advancement of women in our region, concentrating on the following areas:

1. The advancement of women has a bearing on peace and development, and has implications at all levels, and should therefore be addressed locally, nationally, regionally and globally. In particular, women as agents and beneficiaries of development must be fully integrated into policy formulation, planning, decision-making and implementation.

2. Women should have equal rights, obligations and opportunities with men in all fields and at all levels of development. Their empowerment and the improvement of their political, social and economic status are essential for human development, and self-reliance of women and their families.

3. Formal, non-formal and informal education is essential for empowering women with knowledge, skills and self-confidence for full participation in development.

4. Priority should be given to health programmes targeting women and the girl-child throughout their life cycle, particularly in the fields of nutrition, basic health and reproductive health.

5. The increasing global concern about the human dimensions of development requires the integration of gender concerns in all stages and at all levels of sustainable development as a means to ensure human well-being, equitably enjoyed by all people. The interrelationship between population, resources, the environment and development should be fully recognized, properly managed and brought into a harmonious and dynamic synergy.

6. Alleviation of poverty and the eradication of absolute poverty are fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development and the advancement of women. Consistent efforts towards achieving a balanced gender partnership are a prerequisite for the full development of human potential.

7. Strengthening of national machineries for the advancement of women in various dimensions and with effective collaboration between Governments and non-governmental organizations is essential for the full and equal integration of women in people-centred development.

8. The human rights of women and the girl-child are inalienable, integral and indivisible parts of universal human rights and consequently all forms of discrimination against women, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence should be eliminated.

9. Violence against women in the family, society and conflict situations must be eliminated if women are to enjoy their rights as individuals and members of the family, society, state and global communities. In this respect, the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and other relevant human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions is crucial. The role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution should be enhanced and strengthened.

10. The media are urged to respect fully the dignity of women, in particular by portraying women positively in all their diverse roles.

11. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, donor countries and agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public are urged to support and assist the members and associate members of ESCAP in implementing the following Plan of Action.

Adopt the following Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific as a means to accelerate the attainment of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in the Asian and Pacific region, and to contribute to preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. The participants therefore commit themselves, taking into account the social, economic and political conditions of each country, to take all necessary measures to ensure effective implementation of the following Plan of Action at the national, regional and international levels in cooperation with the United Nations system, and other regional and international organizations as well as non-governmental organizations.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

I. MISSION STATEMENT

To achieve the equal status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life.

To promote and ensure the human rights of women at all stages of their life cycle.

To create or reorient political, economic and social processes and institutions to enable women to participate fully and actively in decision-making in the family and community and at the national, regional and international levels.

To empower women and men to work together as equal partners and to inspire a new generation of women and men to work together for equality, sustainable development, and peace.

This Plan of Action lays down a framework which can be used by national Governments to design concrete programmes and policies in all spheres of women's involvement so as to bring the goals envisaged in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women well within the reach of the countries of the region by the beginning of the twenty-first century. This plan of action will be a regional input to the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995.

II. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL OVERVIEW

1. Since the adoption in 1985 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, there have been major political, economic, social and cultural changes and upheavals that have had both positive and negative effects on women. The impact of these global processes on the Asian and Pacific region forms the background against which the Plan of Action was formulated and the context within which its proposals for action will be implemented.

2. In the political sphere, the end of the cold war was expected to create favourable conditions for peace and stability, which are prerequisites for sustainable economic and social progress. However, it has also brought about conflicts arising out of ethnic, religious, political and other considerations that jeopardize regional and international peace and stability. Although the importance of women's roles in maintaining peace and furthering the process of democratization has been increasingly recognized, women continue to be specific targets of violence in situations of armed and non-armed conflict. Women are also victims of terrorism. To the extent that women continue to be excluded

from political decision-making and conflict resolution, their vulnerability is heightened.

3. Global economic changes - structural change and adjustment, growing economic interdependence among countries, new regional and subregional alliances and trading arrangements - have resulted in both advantages and disadvantages for individual countries in the region and for particular groups within countries, including women. The general level of economic growth in the Asian and Pacific region has been particularly high, with a number of countries experiencing very rapid economic transformations in which both women and men have been active participants. However, growth has not been achieved so readily in other countries, some of which have had to implement far-reaching economic restructuring and structural adjustment policies. While such policies offer the potential for long-term growth by expanding employment opportunities they have resulted in short-term declines in income and growing unemployment for some countries and many individuals. Women in poor families, young women and women workers as a group tend to be both the majority affected, and the most severely affected, by the negative effects of structural adjustment policies and the continuing debt crisis. In the countries in transition from centrally planned to market economies, women have been particularly hard hit by large-scale unemployment linked to cut-backs in State enterprises and by the declines in subsidized education, health and welfare services.

4. Even where women's participation in the labour force has increased, this has largely been in non-regular forms of employment in the informal sector, in home-based work, subcontracting and part-time work rather than in formal wage employment. Under such informal work arrangements, women are often not entitled to non-wage benefits, are subject to poor working conditions, are not covered by labour legislation and lack social protection.

5. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade promises to increase the international flow of goods, capital, services and technology, leading to global economic growth that should benefit both women and men. However, all countries will not necessarily benefit equally. Inequitable international structures and unequal relations among countries may tend to exacerbate international development disparities and internal inequities. Women have tended to bear the brunt of the burden of the resultant unemployment and poverty. Consequently, many have become involved in international labour migration as countries capitalize on "the comparative advantage of women's disadvantages".

6. Rapid advances in technology affect particular groups of women in different ways. Advances in technology generally increase the productivity of labour, contributing to higher earnings and economic growth, while domestic applications of technology have the potential to lighten the burden of domestic work. However, the positive impact of technology is likely to be greatest for women with higher levels of skill and education.

7. The negative impact of technological changes is likely to be greatest on women because wage employment for women is being eroded by new technologies and flexible production arrangements. Under the combined impact of labour-saving technologies and the increasing reliance of multinational manufacturers on

flexible work arrangements, especially subcontracting, and the consequent decline in formal sector employment opportunities for unskilled labour, women workers tend to face greater pressure than men to work for lower wages. Women are more likely to be exploited in this way because of their weak bargaining position and because home-based work, which reduces overheads for employers, is culturally acceptable for women and compatible with their domestic and child-care roles.

8. The economies in transition which have embarked upon economic reforms and market-oriented policies in recent years have felt the impact of reductions in public support services somewhat more strongly than other countries in the region. This is partly explained by the fact that the level of such services had generally been higher in these economies as compared with some other economies in the region. Privatization in these economies has also brought in the spectre of unemployment, and women, with the perceived primacy of their domestic responsibilities and their inadequacies in employable skills relative to men, have been faced with the lack of employment opportunities. The general fall in the provision of social services has also exposed groups of women suffering from special kinds of vulnerabilities, such as age, disease, disability or acute poverty, to the prospect of being virtually abandoned by society at large.

9. Women, who often have a different environmental perspective from men, have borne the brunt of the ill effects of environmental degradation. In many countries of the region, women are particularly active (although often uncounted) in subsistence agriculture and food production, which tend to depend heavily on the natural environment. Men are more active in commercial agriculture and fishing, which more often involve potentially unsustainable methods of utilizing the environment. Similarly, although the international environmental debate has tended to emphasize the greenhouse effect, the conservation of wildlife and genetic resources, and other global issues of the "Green Agenda", women's lives are more immediately affected by local issues such as air and water pollution, traffic congestion, urban overcrowding and waste disposal on the "Brown Agenda".

10. Nuclear radiation and the incineration of stockpiles of chemical weapons have also had an adverse impact on the environment, particularly in the Pacific. The current moratorium on nuclear testing is a positive step towards addressing the concerns about the degradation of the environment.

11. Widespread social change in the Asian and Pacific region has created the preconditions in a number of countries for significant advances in the status of women. Major improvements in women's access to education, nutrition and health care are reflected in rapid declines in fertility and mortality in a number of countries in the region. However, the speed and magnitude of the improvements in these countries serve to highlight the lack of change in others. For many women in the region, low levels of education and skills and lack of access to information and knowledge reduce their potential contribution to development and their share in its benefits. The lack of social protection for women among international labour migrants, refugees and persons with disabilities are social development issues of special concern in the region.

12. Of particular concern to women in the Asian and Pacific region is the increasing risk of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), associated in part with the high incidence of male, female and child sex workers as well as drug addicts in a number of countries. World Health Organization studies indicate that the rate of growth of HIV/AIDS in some areas of the region is among the highest in the world. It is also higher among women, because they are biologically particularly vulnerable to most sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. An unwittingly exposed group of women are single-partner married women exposed to the risk of infection from husbands who also have sexual relations with other women having multiple male partners. National and international sex tourism, increased migration and a growing international sex and drug trade have increased the commercial significance of prostitution in the region. Ignorance, resistance to the use of safe sex practices, particularly among men, and women's low status, contribute to the heightened vulnerability of women in the region to HIV/AIDS, as well as to other sexually transmitted diseases. The high prevalence of anaemia among women in the region and the risk of complications during childbirth also expose women to the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission through blood transfusions.

13. Social change has been accompanied by significant changes in the relationships between women and men, especially in societies where there have been major advances in education for women and significant increases in women's participation in the paid labour force. The boundaries of the sex-based division of labour between productive and reproductive roles are gradually being crossed as women enter formerly male-dominated areas of work and men accept greater responsibility for domestic tasks, including child care. However, changes in women's roles have been greater and much more rapid than changes in men's roles and, among both women and men, attitudes and values relating to gender roles have generally changed very little. In many of the countries of the region, differences between women's and men's achievements and activities are still not recognized as the consequences of socially constructed gender roles rather than immutable biological differences. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the assumption that gender roles are fixed biologically has become embedded in cultures, resulting in attitudes and behaviour of both women and men that have proved particularly resistant to change.

14. In addition to political, economic, social and technological changes, national and international development priorities and strategies have changed since 1985 in ways of special significance to women. Some countries, particularly those in the Pacific, are questioning the impact of the onslaught of external influences on community values and institutions. The international community is moving toward a new dynamic paradigm that identifies the well-being of people rather than the current level of per capita national income as the essence of development. Concepts such as sustainability, human development, social development, gender-responsive development, women's rights as human rights, equity and social justice are increasingly central to the development debate. Development thinking has also shifted from viewing the continuing discrimination against women only as a women's issue to studying it as an issue of the whole society. As a consequence, relative roles and responsibilities are changing among the principal development actors:

Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, communities, families and individuals.

15. The status and situation of women in Asia and the Pacific have improved since the formulation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Women in many countries have made important gains in terms of literacy, health, education, labour-force participation and employment. However, marked female-male disparities persist and the absolute indicators of women's status and human resources development remain low in the less developed countries of the region. This continuing gap in the enjoyment of the fruits of development has led to a movement towards sustainable, equitable and humane development that is respectful of the rights of women and men. Therefore, much remains to be done before the region can claim to have achieved the objectives of equality, development and peace established for the United Nations Decade for Women and elaborated in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

III. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

A. The growing feminization of poverty

16. A substantial proportion of the population of the region, especially in South Asia, continues to live in absolute poverty. Poverty exists in other regions as well, although the incidence is less. Women, in particular those who are elderly, disabled, and from indigenous and minority cultures, suffer the most under conditions of absolute poverty. The number of rural and urban slum women living in poverty is increasing at a faster rate than for men and the proportion of women among the poor and extreme poor is growing. Poverty is known to have driven countless women in the region to low-status, low-paying occupations in domestic service or in organized prostitution, frequently as migrants away from their homes, at times across international borders, exposing them to considerable risk of economic exploitation and sexual abuse.

17. Within the family, poverty strikes women disproportionately hard. As women are entrusted with the responsibilities of home management, the absence of resources and entitlements to meet basic minimum needs for the survival of the family burdens women particularly. In material terms also, women and girl-children in ultra-poor families are the worst sufferers, as the distribution of family resources under patriarchal systems tends to be skewed against them. When total resources are very limited in any case, it is easy to surmise why this tendency may spell disaster in the life situation of these women. If they are unable to emerge from poverty, the cycle tends to be perpetuated through their children.

18. The majority of women in the region reside in rural areas and urban slums, and the majority of women workers are engaged in subsistence agriculture and the informal sector with little or no regulation, legislative protection, and trade union support.

19. The structural adjustment process has generally increased the quantity of employment for women; however, this increase has been mainly in non-regular forms of employment, including self-employment in the informal sector. Such

workers are often not covered by labour legislation and lack job security. The downscaling of the public sector, budgetary restraints and privatization have affected women adversely, particularly through the reduction of subsidized welfare services.

20. Rapid technological advances are likely to affect poor women by devaluing their traditional skills, thus jeopardizing their survival strategies and pushing them into extreme poverty.

21. Environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources have hit women the hardest.

22. In the countries with economies in transition, reduction in State involvement in public support services has had direct adverse effects on the poorest of the region, the majority of whom happen to be women and children.

23. The benefits from the resource flow from the North to the South are still disproportionately low compared with the pressing needs of women from the South countries. This has aggravated the poverty and dependency situation of women.

B. Inequality in women's access to and participation in economic activities

24. Although women tend to have lower reported levels of labour-force participation than men, much of women's work is unrecognized as economic activity, even by women themselves, and is therefore unreported and unrecorded in official sources of data. The problem of improving databases on women's economic contributions cannot be addressed without challenging existing concepts and definitions of "work" and "economic activity". Since women contribute at least two thirds of unpaid labour and up to now unrecognized work in the home, on family farms etc., there is need to redefine these concepts as well as find new methods that capture these contributions fully and give them appropriate value in statistics. Women's contribution to economic development is underestimated and thus official data sources provide an incomplete basis for the formulation of policies, plans and programmes relating to women. Underreporting and underenumeration are particularly serious in subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, in which large numbers of women work.

25. In spite of some increases in the levels of women's workforce participation, significant gender differences, especially in the structure of employment, persist in most countries of the region. A large majority of the women of the region still work in subsistence agriculture as unpaid family labour or as unskilled wage labour. An increasing number of women also work in low-productivity non-agricultural jobs which are often in vulnerable, unprotected and irregular types of employment. Structural adjustment policies can contribute to this tendency. Production units in export processing zones where many workers are women are often characterized by low wages and exploitative working conditions.

26. There is also increasing evidence of women entering home-based, subcontract work, which almost always denies them protection under labour laws and isolates

them from fellow workers, thereby reducing opportunities to organize. These workers are often not recognized in national labour statistics as economically productive workers. Structural adjustment programmes that emphasize privatization and the role of the market have sometimes resulted in reduction of the level of labour standards, even in formal sector jobs. At times, women have suffered a disproportionate reduction in labour market opportunities under economic reforms, especially in economies in transition.

27. Women's access to wage and salaried employment is heavily skewed towards lower paid jobs. When new job opportunities are created specifically for women they tend to be in low-wage, low-skilled occupations, often under highly exploitative conditions. The vast majority of women in the region work in self-employment outside agriculture in low-paying trade or service activities.

28. A growing number of women from the region are migrating across national boundaries for employment. The vast majority of these international migrant women workers are absorbed in domestic service in Western Asia and in the more developed economies of East Asia. Other migrant women work in the entertainment industry, often ending up as victims of international trafficking and prostitution.

29. The major difficulties encountered by women in self-employment activities relate to access to credit, markets and technical skills. Customary law and convention in most countries preclude women from claiming family assets. Women also lack adequate access to institutional credit facilities.

C. Inadequate recognition of women's role and concerns in environment and natural resource management

30. Natural and man-made disasters such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, erosion, deforestation and inappropriate land use have resulted in deprivation of traditional means of livelihood. Such conditions have pushed great numbers of poor women into marginal environments where critically low levels of water supplies, shortages of fuel, overutilization of grazing and arable lands and population density have deprived them of their livelihood.

31. In the Pacific, environmental degradation caused by nuclear radiation, destruction of chemical weapons, large-scale logging and mining has heightened concerns over the health situation and means of livelihood of men, women and children, and the already fragile ecosystems.

32. Natural resource management and safeguarding the environment are the responsibility of all, but the consequences of environmental degradation particularly affect women, who are responsible for obtaining fuel and water in much of the region. Despite the close interaction between the environment and women's lives, environmental policies have not been formulated from a gender perspective. As a result, women have tended to suffer the effects of environmental degradation. Where women are involved in environmental management, protection and conservation, they can be a decisive factor in the success of programmes.

33. In addition to the natural environment, the domestic environment, particularly housing and settlement infrastructure and access to water and sanitation, are vital concerns of women. Women in the region also have a strong interest in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound lifestyles, consumption patterns and waste management. Women are concerned to ensure that the ownership of intellectual property rights is adequately and effectively protected. Subject to national legislation and policies, women are also concerned to ensure that technology, knowledge and customary and traditional practices of local and indigenous people, including resource owners and custodians, are adequately and effectively protected and that they thereby benefit directly, on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms, from any utilization of such technologies, knowledge and practices or from any technological development directly derived therefrom.

D. Inequitable access to power and decision-making

34. Although there have been advances in some countries, overall there is evidence of continuing and serious inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making in virtually all areas affecting women's lives. These inequities are evident both in the public domain and in women's private lives.

35. International standards and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, can be used as a powerful strategy of persuasion directed at national Governments. Thirty countries from Asia and the Pacific have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, only 18 member countries of ESCAP have acceded to or ratified it, and some have done so with many reservations. More than half of the countries have not signed any of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and few have ratified more than 7 out of 22 conventions that are deemed to be relevant for women workers.

36. Although this region has been the first to have women as heads of Government and in very senior positions in Government, women continue to be largely excluded from decision-making. By 1993, a very small percentage of cabinet ministers in the region were women. These ministers tend to be concentrated in non-economic portfolios.

37. Women have the right to vote in all countries of the region but they hold a very small percentage of seats in the legislative bodies. In most countries of Asia and the Pacific, with few exceptions, the percentage of seats held by women in national legislative bodies has been low. There are few appropriate mechanisms to assist and encourage women's participation in political and other structures. Prevailing norms and styles of political life and employment tend to perpetuate women's limited access to decision-making processes, including by setting up negative stereotypes and depriving young women of positive role models.

38. The participation of women in public administration and also in workers' and employers' organizations, especially in the higher echelons, has been minimal in most countries of the region. In the judicial sphere, while women are entering the legal profession as lawyers in larger numbers than ever before, they are not proportionately represented in the judiciary or higher echelons of the legal profession. There are relatively few women at decision- and policy-making levels in political parties. The number of women generally is also limited at various levels within the party organizations. In addition, gender concerns are not adequately reflected in political party declarations, documents and manifestos.

39. There has been considerable progress in the Asian and Pacific region in promoting gender equality through legislation. In almost all Asian and Pacific countries, stipulations on the equality of women are subsumed within the constitutional declarations regarding the equal rights and obligations of all citizens. A number of countries have chosen to reinforce these constitutional guarantees by enacting separate legislation. Some countries have established separate judicial procedures to investigate, address and monitor sex discrimination, in addition to the general judicial provisions. Discriminatory laws relating to employment and the family have been amended or removed and new laws and measures have been introduced in order to improve women's legal status. The norms, attitudes, behaviour and values that define each individual society and culture are transmitted to future generations primarily through the family and reinforced by societal values. In some countries, gains have been made in domestic partnership and role-sharing, but traditional norms and values continue to assign women a lower status than men, restricting their access to power and participation in family decision-making. This is where future generations learn gender relations and roles which, if not addressed, will undermine efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making in other spheres and activities.

E. Violation of women's human rights

40. Another area of common concern is the widespread incidence of physical, sexual and psychological abuse perpetrated against women both outside and inside the family, often with the knowledge and tacit approval of other family members and the community at large. The international community has expressed its views through the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and other United Nations resolutions, clearly stipulating that violence against women outside and inside the family is a violation of women's human rights. The recent appointment of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women is significant and welcome.

41. A considerable amount of abuse and harassment of women also takes place within the family. The phenomenon of violence in the home is common, and is not confined to poor or illiterate families, as is often presumed. In some communities, female babies and girl-children have been known to be systematically condemned to pervasive neglect. The extreme form of such neglect and abuse is manifested in female foeticide and infanticide that have been reported in some countries in the region. Dowry, or the perceived inadequacy of

it, has been the cause of harassment of young brides in thousands of reported cases in the region, at times leading to death.

42. Another form of violence and sexual abuse of women which is rampant in this region is trafficking in women, which is sometimes carried out across international borders. Young women from poor families are bought and sold like commodities, at times with the knowledge and tacit approval of poverty-stricken parents. These women are not merely subjected to systematic physical and sexual abuse, and economic exploitation to the hilt by the traffickers and their henchmen, but they also suffer from great vulnerability to infection from sexually transmitted diseases, including the life-threatening AIDS.

43. Women in large numbers have been subjected to violence in times of war as well as armed and social conflicts. During the post-Nairobi Conference period, the Asian and Pacific region has seen numerous conflicts of the ethnic, political, religious and communal variety, which have left their scars on hundreds and thousands of innocent men, women and children. Women are particularly vulnerable at such times of uncertainty as they are often left by themselves to fend for the family and to cope with the added burden of loss of men, or catering for male family members suffering from war-inflicted physical disabilities or psychological trauma.

44. A particular manifestation of society's mistreatment of women is apparent in the kinds of abuse and indignities to which women are subjected at the time of such disturbances. Political, ethnic and religious conflicts in the region are systematically stained by the large-scale incidence of rape and molestation of women. The ideology of patriarchy that fixes different sexual norms for men and women and one that tacitly exonerates the rights of men over women almost as items of property, even in normal times, seems to extend to systematic and organized violation of women's bodies by the male of the rival parties at times of conflict, as if to put the seal of victory over the rival.

45. Indigenous women are often doubly discriminated against as woman and as representatives of indigenous communities. In particular, their cultural identity has been threatened by the development process which fails to take into account factors such as their specific traditions, their land tenure systems and community structures.

46. Another dimension of gender inequality derives from the excessive work burden women have traditionally been expected to bear. Such expectations continue to shape women's daily lives under changing economic conditions. All across the region, in spite of the fact that women's market participation has increased steadily, there is no commensurate reduction in the household responsibilities of women. Work outside the home has in most cases been in addition to the domestic chores for which women have always been responsible, resulting in excessively long working hours. This is so in both urban and in rural areas, where the need for additional cash incomes has been drawing more and more women into the monetized sector, adding to their workload. The growing inadequacy of fuel and firewood has exacerbated the problems of rural women. In the families that can afford hired domestic help, the load has been shifted to poorer women working as such, for whom again, the economic contribution they make to the household kitty has not served as a factor in reducing their own

domestic workload. The culture of sharing housework by men of the household has not as yet acquired much social acceptability in the region.

47. Awareness-raising should be promoted and cultural efforts made so that the family can serve as a milieu within which positive gender education can be practised. Evidence from the region has shown that much of the violence directed against women from early infancy is committed within the family. The roots of gender discrimination are often planted in young minds by the nature of the socialization processes that children observe, experience and are taught within the family. If women of the region are to aspire to justice and fair play, the sanctity of domestic privacy can no longer be used as an excuse for continuing human rights abuses against women within the family. Efforts must be directed at the family to ensure that gender discrimination is confronted where it is least visible to the public eye and perhaps most insidious in its reach and impact.

48. The year 1994 has been proclaimed by the General Assembly as the International Year of the Family, with the motto "Building the smallest unit of democracy at the heart of society". If the family in the Asian and Pacific region is to aspire to be a democratic structure, then gender equality within the family is a must. Instead of being a hierarchical structure of domination and subordination, of control and subservience, the family then becomes a closely-knit kin-group of caring individuals in which burdens and responsibilities are shared equitably and equal partnership between men and women is ensured.

49. The two broad approaches to attain this vision of a democratic family are through advocacy and education on the one hand and State intervention in the form of legal reforms and better law implementation, on the other. On the advocacy front, there is need to use a gamut of strategies, including training and gender-sensitization in formal and informal educational systems, through extensive revision of syllabuses and teaching material, and through community and non-governmental organization involvement, as well as innovative use of the media to spread democratic values within the family. At the other end, the State should intervene in a much more active manner than it has done in the past to reform family law provisions that treat women unequally in matters such as property and inheritance, custody of children, divorce and maintenance, and so on, preferably with the initiatives for such reforms coming from women in the community. There is need for State intervention also in cases of overt discrimination of girl-children by parents, not merely in the extreme cases of female infanticide but also in day-to-day matters such as the provision of basic education, nutritional requirements and basic health services. Stricter laws and law enforcement are also needed to end the menace of continued physical and sexual abuse of women and girl-children within the family.

F. Inequalities and lack of access to health

50. While many countries of the region have made significant advances in the provision for health care for women at all stages of the life cycle, there remain marked inadequacies. General health care, maternal health care and treatment of complications from pregnancy and childbirth-related problems are

still very inadequate in many countries. Maternal mortality rates have increased in around 10 of the countries where data are available, while decreasing in several countries. Discrepancies in maternal death rates between developed countries of the West and the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific continue to be the highest among all public health indicators, although infant mortality rates in the region have fallen significantly owing to improved public health and child immunization programmes. One of the main reasons for the high incidence of obstetrically difficult births and anaemia in women is poor nutrition of women and girls and the excessive workload women and girls are made to bear from early childhood. These factors continue to shape the conditions of women's daily lives in many households. Furthermore, facilities for the treatment of infection toxaemia and haemorrhage, which are the major cause of maternal mortality, are generally inadequate in many countries.

51. The incidence of unwanted pregnancies is still very high in the region, suggesting, among other factors, inadequate access of women to education about reproductive choices and to family planning services, or lack of control over their reproductive roles in an unequal sexual partnership. Excessive workload, lack of proper nutrition, repeated pregnancies, poor education, and lack of access to health-care facilities mark the lives of the majority of women in the region, particularly those who are poor. Many countries continue to suffer from inadequate and very skewed distribution of medical services. Distribution is heavily skewed in favour of urban and against rural areas, while within each, access to services is skewed in favour of men and against women. Poor rural women are the most neglected of all groups. In addition, one quarter to one third of all maternal deaths occur when births are too numerous or to mothers who are under 16 or over 33 and when the births are too closely spaced. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies, which have continued to flourish despite legislation to the contrary in some countries, have contributed to this problem. Morbidity rates are known to be high in the region, but reliable and valid indicators of morbidity are yet to be developed.

52. Total fertility rates (TFR) continued to decline in all subregions of Asia and the Pacific throughout the post-Nairobi Conference period. TFR dropped from 2.42 to 2.19 in developing countries in East Asia and from 3.69 to 3.37 in South-East Asia from 1985 to 1992. In South Asia and the Pacific islands, the rate decreased during the same period from 4.71 to 4.36 and from 4.92 to 4.62 respectively. The trend of providing only "women-centred" birth control programmes has persisted. Owing to the boy preference that exists in some areas, the phenomena of female foeticide and infanticide still exist in some areas. The sex ratio at birth (number of females per hundred males) in such areas has dropped to a low level, which is a cause for concern.

53. Some biological, social and physiological features predispose women to greater vulnerability to most sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. Male-to-female transmission of such diseases is reportedly two to four times more efficient than for female-to-male transmission. The group that is most vulnerable in terms of absolute numbers in this respect are single-partner married women who are exposed to being infected by their sexually promiscuous husbands. Also among the most affected by the AIDS crisis and at the receiving end of many sexually transmitted diseases are women in prostitution who often lack adequate health protection. In Asian and Pacific societies, women have

little say in defining the terms of sexual relationships and, given the nature of women's vulnerability in such societies, the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS among women needs to be urgently controlled by designing programmes that take into account the social and cultural context of women's situation.

54. The majority of women and girls throughout the countries of this region suffer from poor nutritional status and well-being at all stages of the life cycle. Coming from economically and socially disadvantaged sections in rural and urban areas, their problems are compounded by a lack of basic amenities, such as clean drinking water and sanitation. Lack of access to and control of primary health care and pervasive commercial pressures and influences have replaced sound traditional practices such as birthing, breast-feeding, family foods and child care, which are all essential to the good-quality health of women. This has resulted in the disempowerment of women in their own health care and a wastage of women's innate resources.

G. Inequalities and lack of access to education and literacy

55. Although illiteracy rates among women in many countries in the region have declined by around 5 to 10 per cent, the incidence of female illiteracy is still alarmingly high in the region. The situation in terms of women's education is much better in East and South-East, Asia and the Pacific and in pockets of South Asia. Yet, as noted earlier, almost everywhere in the region, wherever illiteracy exists, women constitute the bulk of the illiterate population. Lack of literacy and basic skills not merely precludes large sections of women from productive employment opportunities but also affects the quality of life of the women, as well as that of the rest of the society, in numerous ways. A significant number of studies from all over the region have shown conclusively that female literacy is the single most important factor in determining the success of family planning and primary health care services.

56. Boys have been given preference over girls in matters of education in general. When resources are limited and opportunity costs high, the girl-child is doubly condemned. It would be wrong to presume that the correlation between illiteracy and poverty is absolute. Much depends on the social norms and value which society places on education as well as on girls. Consequently, women continue to constitute a lower percentage of the student body, especially at the secondary and higher levels, in almost all countries of the region. They form an insignificantly small fraction in most science and technology fields.

57. Textbooks and syllabuses often perpetuate gender-typing of roles. Under such conditions, the acquisition of formal literacy cannot act as a vehicle for changing social mores. The educational and skill-acquisition profiles of women are still very skewed, even in countries which have made significant strides in literacy, reflecting the strong hold of societal views about what specializations are proper for women. While there are indications that the sex-stereotyping of education or vocation is becoming weaker, this tendency is as yet too insignificant to have caused large, perceptible changes in the overall distribution. Skewed distribution of female students in traditionally women-dominated areas and vocational training programmes reflects the broad social perceptions about women's roles. Women also have fewer opportunities for

career development and leadership training regardless of the degree of the economic development of the country.

58. In many countries of the region, informal education is playing a very important role in literacy for many women and girls. But the availability of and access to informal educational institutions for women and girls is still very limited.

H. Negative portrayal of women in the media

59. The region is experiencing a rapidly changing media environment. The new "communications revolution" with satellite broadcasting and other advances in technology cut across national boundaries, putting the media beyond the reach of Governments and social institutions such as the family and community.

60. While the globalization of the media offers the promise of greater interaction among peoples, it can also create and reinforce images, attitudes and behaviour that may often be contradictory to the advancement of women.

61. Among the most destructive forms of media influence is the perpetuation and reinforcement of negative images of women that do not provide an accurate or realistic picture of women's multiple roles and value in a changing world. Even more insidious is the use by the media of women's bodies as sex objects. Most vulnerable to the influence of the media are young women, who feel impelled to conform to the materialistic, consumer-driven and exploitative stereotypes. At the same time, while the media may have been used to promote cultural values, ideology and religion selectively to justify the control of women by social and State institutions, the progressive forms of cultural values and religion have also been effective means to promote the advancement of women at the grass-root levels. It is appropriate to change current media practices that thrive on sensationalism and profit motives, as otherwise the conflict between conservative values and pornographic and violent images can only worsen.

62. Media images of women affect women's lives in several ways: they perpetuate stereotypes and create a distorted self-image. Myths and misconceptions enforced by the media also affect the thinking and attitudes of government planners, thereby further marginalizing the role and contribution of women as well as compromising the future of young women and the girl-child.

63. Media ownership patterns in the region indicate a strong link between business - especially multinationals - and political groups. At the same time, ownership and control of the media are in male hands, which means that the content of the media is presented largely from a male perspective, reflecting, in many ways, men's values and perceptions. While there are increasing numbers of women employed in the various media, employment patterns show that women are grossly under-represented in decision-making positions. The power to control and significantly influence the media still eludes women.

I. Inadequate mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women

64. Effective mechanisms are needed at local, national and regional levels to serve as catalysts for promoting the advancement of women. In most countries, the mechanisms established lack the capacity, in terms of the relative position in government structure, and financial and human resources, to perform this function effectively.

65. National machineries for the advancement of women have been created in many countries of the region. Diverse in form, they provide a tool for the advancement of women through advocacy, monitoring of public policies and programmes, and mobilizing support. However, these national machineries are often marginalized in national government structure and given the responsibility for addressing gender issues across all sectors. Moreover, they are understaffed and usually lack the expertise to engage in effective advocacy and gender training. They are also often underfunded and unable to mobilize the information and authority needed for advocacy, coordination and monitoring within government. They also have insufficient links with non-governmental organizations which can assist in identifying priority gender issues to be addressed and action needed, especially critical monitoring and evaluation functions.

66. Women's organizations, including grass-roots women's groups, professional associations, women's networks and other non-governmental organizations have demonstrated success in effectively and forcefully mobilizing women, especially at the community level in both rural and urban areas. However, their effectiveness is hampered by lack of coordination among themselves, inadequate linkage with Government, and insufficient financial resources. Another critical problem is the unpaid nature of the services rendered by women in these organizations – a manifestation of the low value given to women's time and expertise.

67. International-level mechanisms to promote the advancement of women basically experience the same problems as national machineries.

68. While there have been improvements in the development and use of statistics and indicators desegregated by sex, much remains to be done to further refine concepts and methods to generate new, better-quality and timely data, and to put statistics in the hands of diverse users.

69. Experience in some countries shows that the process of advancing the concerns of women is considerably aided by the existence of a strong national machinery with the authority to advocate, coordinate and monitor the policies and programmes of various government agencies. The critical elements required are an appropriate institutional position within the government bureaucracy to endow it with similar authority as other central coordinating bodies for planning, proper staffing in skills and numbers, and adequate resources to enable it to carry out its functions.

70. Other equally critical elements for mainstreaming gender concerns in public policies and programmes are: (a) assigning well-defined responsibilities, and strengthening the institutional capacity of all government agencies to undertake

gender-responsive development planning in their sectors or areas of responsibility; (b) timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women and men to provide a basis for formulating policies and programmes, and for monitoring and evaluating them.

71. It has also been shown that a strong national machinery, complemented by strong women's organizations at the community and various other levels, is best able to access resources and mobilize women to address priority gender concerns.

J. Inadequate recognition of women's role in peace-building

72. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels, particularly in international negotiations on the peace process, needs to be addressed, as women, often being the worst victims of war and armed conflicts, could contribute constructively in defining alternatives and steps to be taken for peace-building and conflict resolution.

73. It has been suggested that, unless threats to international peace and security are eliminated, full equality between women and men cannot be achieved. Experience has shown that the slow progress in reaching agreements for peaceful settlements of armed conflicts prolongs the sufferings for men, women and children, especially women, as they have to bear the burden of maintaining the survival of the family.

IV. GOALS, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN

The critical areas of concern highlighted in this Plan of Action embrace the themes of equality, development and peace established for the United Nations Decade for Women and elaborated in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. As the year 2000 approaches, with the objectives of the Strategies still far from being attained, each Government needs to adopt at the national level appropriate and relevant time-bound and quantitative targets in each area to make the Plan of Action a reality for action and achievement.

A. Vulnerable groups and feminization of poverty

Goal

To ensure women's empowerment through equitable access to and adequate control over resources so that poverty is eradicated and women of the region are able to live a life of dignity and fulfilment.

1. Agriculture

Strategic objective

It is necessary to mainstream women's concerns into effective agricultural and rural development policies, plans and programmes in order to ensure

household and national food security and adequate livelihood for the rural women of the region.

Action to be taken

(i) Resources need to be specially allocated to ensure the growth of broader opportunities to generate income for women involved in the development of subsistence agriculture and small and marginal farms where a large majority of the poor women of the region are absorbed.

(ii) Measures should be taken to ensure that women acquire full entitlement to land rights on an equal basis with men, in terms of both ownership and use rights, that such equality be maintained even under conditions of land shortage or land redistribution, whereby land rights may be jointly held, and that, for indigenous women, their community's right of ancestral domain be respected.

(iii) Special efforts should be made to provide women cultivators with equal access to credit, inputs, technology and extension services and ensure equal pay for women agricultural wage-workers.

(iv) Measures should be taken to protect women from hazardous chemicals used in agriculture.

2. Informal sector

Strategic objective

To promote, through multifaceted innovative strategies, the income and employment potential in the informal trade, services and manufacturing sectors which absorb the bulk of women workers of the region outside of agriculture.

Action to be taken

(i) Where appropriate, to lift the credit constraint on self-employed women by promoting women's self-help groups, credit networks based on group-lending and other similar innovative ventures to ensure that women without access to bankable collateral have adequate access to fixed and working capital. The involvement of non-governmental organizations in the field of credit should be encouraged.

(ii) To encourage women's cooperatives for marketing and input procurement needs by promoting awareness, and catering for training needs and networking.

(iii) To improve working conditions, provide social security and minimize the comparative isolation of poor women workers in the informal sectors, the following measures should be promoted: (a) create or strengthen workers' associations and other groups to create solidarity and facilitate group action, including negotiations with contractors, suppliers and employers; (b) develop non-conventional forms of social protection through community

groups, cooperatives or other ad hoc groups that are able to provide the necessary capacity for social solidarity, mutual insurance and mutual protection; (c) support such groups through the provision of leadership training, and by linking them to supportive non-governmental organizations.

(iv) To make available to poor women opportunities for skill upgrading and training in basic management skills.

3. Female-headed and female-maintained households

Strategic objective

To cater for the needs of female-maintained households in view of the special situation of women in such households as the chief breadwinners and household managers, usually under acute poverty conditions and with high dependency ratios.

Action to be taken

(i) Priority should be given to poor female-maintained households in government assistance or income-generating rural and urban development programmes.

(ii) Special income-generating schemes for female heads of households in poverty should be designed, keeping in mind their domestic as well as household responsibilities.

(iii) The involvement of non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to ensure greater access by female-maintained households to economic resources by forging links with existing facilities and creating new structures suitable to their needs.

4. Elderly women

Strategic objective

To design social safety networks, including public assistance programmes and innovative neighbourhood support mechanisms, in order to cater for the physical and psychological needs of the growing body of elderly women in the region who face increasing marginalization in the wake of the steady erosion in the joint family system and emerging demographic changes in the region.

Action to be taken

(i) In recognition of the socio-economic and demographic changes affecting an increasing number of elderly women, many of whom experience declining health, with limited access to the labour market, adequate resources should be provided to cater for the needs of elderly women in the region.

(ii) Innovative programmes may be designed with the involvement of non-governmental organizations where the wisdom and experience of elderly women may be utilized productively, as, for instance, in neighbourhood child-care centres.

(iii) The special health problems of elderly women need to be catered for adequately by sensitizing the personnel of health-care facilities.

(iv) Geriatric care should be made an integral part of medical and paramedical training.

(v) A media campaign may be launched to highlight the many ways in which positive contributions may be made by the elderly to the welfare and happiness of the family.

(vi) There should be adequate and equitable access to support services for older women and they should be encouraged to use those services to maintain their independence and well-being.

5. Young women and girls

Strategic objective

To meet the special needs of young women and girls with due regard for their creative capabilities, for social, family and community support, employment opportunities, participation in the political process, and access to education, housing and health in order to equip them to achieve their full potential.

Action to be taken

(i) Countries should take effective steps to address the neglect, as well as all types of exploitation and abuse of young women, such as abduction, rape and incest, pornography, trafficking, abandonment and prostitution; in particular, countries should take appropriate action to eliminate sexual abuse of young women and girls both within and outside their borders.

(ii) Countries should aim to meet the needs and aspirations of young women, particularly in the areas of formal and non-formal education, training, employment opportunities, housing and health, thereby ensuring their integration and participation in all spheres of society, including participation in the political process and preparation for leadership roles.

(iii) Countries should create a socio-economic environment conducive to the elimination of all child marriages and other unions, as a matter of urgency, and should discourage early marriage. The social responsibilities that marriage entails should be reinforced in countries' educational programmes. Governments should act against the discrimination against young pregnant women.

(iv) Governments need to recognize that youth organizations are increasingly becoming effective partners in developing programmes. Young women and girls should be actively involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives.

6. Women with disabilities

Strategic objective

To eliminate the dehumanizing isolation and social stigma against women and girls with disabilities and to integrate their concerns into the mainstream of the socio-economic development in the region.

Action to be taken

(i) In accordance with the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and in the light of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, Governments should make every effort to integrate and mainstream disabled women as agents and beneficiaries of development in all sectors of society.

(ii) Extensive educational campaigns should be launched in schools and through the media on the causes, often preventable, of various kinds of disabilities affecting women, and information provided on the course of action to be taken to prevent them; adequate budgetary provisions should be made to treat and prevent the widespread incidence of disability among women in the region.

(iii) Disabled women should be projected as potentially productive members of society in order to dispel social prejudices against them.

(iv) Women's organizations should make special attempts to induct into their activities women with disabilities who have courageously faced the double discrimination of disability and gender, so that they may serve as role models to all women with disabilities and dispel the myths about disability in the community.

(v) Governments should establish a system to identify and provide jobs in all sectors which would be suited to the abilities, potential and aspirations of women with disabilities in order to enable those women to participate in mainstream programmes for enhancing women's participation in economic development.

(vi) Formal and non-formal education and training programme planners, trainers, co-trainees and employers should be sensitized to the special capacities and needs of girls and women with disabilities so that they can participate in general training programmes for women. Training materials should be made available in appropriate formats, such as braille and sign language, for use by girls and women with disabilities.

(vii) Physical access to the workplace for women with disabilities, venues and facilities for the exercise of political rights, including locations for legal and political literacy programmes, political meeting places and voting centres, should be provided.

7. Structural adjustment process

Strategic objective

To study the impact of structural adjustment policies and to ensure that women do not bear a disproportionate burden of such process.

Action to be taken

(i) Special efforts should be made to sustain existing levels and expand, wherever possible, support services that address the gender needs of women.

(ii) Special efforts need to be made to specially strengthen poverty alleviation and wage employment generation programmes through increased allocations and special components for women.

(iii) The budgets of education and health services should be protected and enhanced wherever possible.

(iv) The public distribution system should be expanded and better targeted on the poor.

(v) It is necessary to ensure the full participation of women in the process of reconstruction in countries with economies in transition.

(vi) The impact of the structural adjustment process on women should be continuously studied and monitored.

B. Promoting equality in women's access to and participation in economic activities

Goal

To ensure women's equitable access to services and resources and participation in economic institutions.

1. Gender-responsive planning, policy-making and implementation

Strategic objective

To ensure that account is taken of the differential impacts of policies and programmes on women and men by undertaking gender analysis at all stages of the

development and implementation of government policies. This includes the collection, collation and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data; policy development; and monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies and programmes.

Action to be taken

(i) Resource allocation at macro, sectoral or project levels should reflect adequately the social costs and benefits of women's work.

(ii) Gender and social analysis should be made an integral part of all impact analyses of macro-, sectoral- or micro-level policies, including trade agreements, structural adjustment and poverty alleviation policies and programmes.

(iii) Where women have been so seriously disadvantaged in the past that they cannot have access to mainstream development activities on an equal basis with men, programmes specifically targeted to women, affirmative actions and separate facilities for women should be provided.

(iv) Employment and income generation for women should go hand-in-hand with improvement of working conditions and the welfare of women workers. The quality of employment should be improved through the review, revision and effective implementation of labour legislation to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and treatment and also through improved occupational safety and health measures.

(v) Special efforts should be made to remove obstacles, such as the lack of adequate support services, that prevent women from taking advantage of new employment opportunities.

(vi) Continuous gender-sensitization of officials and planners, government and international funding agencies, and legislators and implementators of government and international funding agencies should be ensured. Such programmes should be accorded formal recognition and priority by the Government. Closer dialogue and cooperation among Government, workers' and employers' organizations, international funding agencies and non-governmental organizations should be promoted.

(vii) For those women most adversely affected by structural adjustment reforms or the transition to market economies, social safety nets should be provided by Governments and employers. In view of the increasing vulnerability of women workers, efforts should be made to develop and improve social protection by both public and private sectors, community groups, grass-roots organizations, etc.

2. The visibility and recognition of women's economic activities

Strategic objective

To develop methodologies for ensuring the full visibility and recognition of women's work within and outside the domestic sphere, including measurement of women's contribution to the household sector of the economy.

Action to be taken

(i) Time-use studies should be carried out by national statistical offices in order to measure the domestic and non-domestic work burden of men, women and children under different socio-economic conditions. Such studies may be carried out at periodic intervals and designed in similar formats in order to facilitate inter-temporal and intercountry comparisons.

(ii) The staff of national statistical offices, including the field staff, the women themselves and the public in general should be sensitized through training programmes and the media so that all women's economic activities within and outside the household are adequately recorded and taken into account in policies and programmes. Questionnaires need to be properly designed so as to capture the extent of women's multifaceted contributions to the economic welfare of the family.

(iii) Data gathered through time-use surveys should be taken into account in the development of government policies and financial assistance programmes.

3. Access to information, skills and knowledge about economic opportunities

Strategic objective

To reduce the gender gap in access to information, skills and knowledge about economic opportunities by providing women with equal access to labour market information, training and information on other economic opportunities.

Action to be taken

(i) Gender-sensitive labour market information systems should be developed to alert policy makers and planners to changes in the pattern of female employment and measure the pay and conditions of women workers. Employment services should be strengthened so that those demanding or supplying labour are aware of and able to adjust to changing labour market conditions.

(ii) Measures should be taken to make information on economic opportunities, including on production and processing technology, as well as marketing, readily accessible to women. Special efforts should be made to devise appropriate means of communicating such information to illiterate, poor

and rural women, including the use of audio-visual materials and the media.

(iii) Where appropriate, Governments should develop affirmative action policies in the recruitment of new extension workers as a means to improve women's access to economic information.

(iv) Measures should be taken to ensure that girls and women with disabilities can participate in general training programmes for women.

(v) Special measures should be targeted to women with disabilities to assist them to gain employment.

4. Mainstreaming women's concerns in agriculture and rural development

Strategic objective

To incorporate women's, particularly women farmer, concerns into agricultural and rural development policies, plans and programmes in order to ensure food security and an adequate livelihood for rural women.

Action to be taken

(i) Adequate resources need to be allocated on a priority basis to ensure growth in the agricultural sector with special emphasis on small and marginal farms where a large majority of the poor women of the region are engaged.

(ii) Measures should be taken to ensure that women acquire full entitlement to land rights on an equal basis with men, in terms of ownership and usage rights and security of tenure, and that such equality be maintained even under conditions of land shortage or land redistribution. Where appropriate, provision should be made for land rights to be jointly held.

(iii) Special efforts should be made to provide women cultivators with equal access to credit, inputs, technology and extension services and to ensure equal pay for women agricultural wage-workers.

(iv) Economic policy makers and planners should be gender-sensitized to ensure careful consideration of the impact of macroeconomic policies on the agricultural sector. Particular attention should be given to providing opportunities to women to ensure that women farmers and labourers are not marginalized by the introduction of new agricultural technologies and their impact on the food security and livelihood strategies of the rural poor.

(v) A gender perspective should be incorporated in training courses for agricultural extension workers. Implementation staff in agricultural and rural development agencies should participate in gender-sensitization programmes.

(vi) The development of new agricultural technologies should give particular attention to reducing the physical workloads of women farmers.

5. Women in industry and commerce

Strategic objective

To reduce the gender gap in the development and utilization of human resources in industry and commerce by facilitating the development and full utilization of the female labour potential in the industrial sector and in commerce.

Action to be taken

(i) Governments should ensure that women workers in the industrial sector have equal access to all strata of the labour market through equitable skill development and technological upgrading. Gender discrimination in employment contract conditions as well as unequal access to higher paid and higher status jobs should be eliminated, and the principle of equal pay for equal work implemented in all areas of employment.

(ii) In traditionally feminized sectors like textiles, garments or handicrafts, comparable worth principles may be invoked to improve the level of wages in sectors and jobs where women predominate.

(iii) In traditionally male-dominated activities in the public and private sectors, affirmative action programmes for women candidates may be invoked to break down gender hierarchies.

(iv) To improve the working conditions and welfare of women workers, measures such as the following should be implemented: extend the application of labour laws to all workers, including contractual, casual, temporary and part-time workers; strengthen labour inspection services to ensure proper enforcement of legislation; promote gender-sensitization training for labour inspectors and women workers on occupational safety and health, labour legislation and workers' rights; make employers aware of the productivity gains associated with improved working conditions; formulate and implement policies against sex discrimination; and adopt legal and/or other measures to protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace.

(v) Affirmative action, education and information programmes should be promoted to enhance women's participation in workers' organizations and the formation of workers' groups and associations among women workers to develop group solidarity, provide support and serve as a training ground for leadership.

(vi) The impact of women's reproductive role on their access to work should be minimized through action such as the removal of any barriers to the recruitment of women, the provision of flexible child-care arrangements and crèches at workplaces, child-care leave provision, breast-feeding breaks and flexible working hours and other support facilities, so that

activities outside the home can be combined as appropriate with child-rearing and domestic responsibilities.

(vii) Business organizations, such as chambers of commerce, should encourage and promote women entrepreneurs.

6. Women in the informal sector

Strategic objective

To reduce the gender gap in the development and utilization of human resources in the informal sector by developing multifaceted and innovative strategies to promote women's income and employment potential in the informal sector in trade, services and manufacturing activities.

Action to be taken

(i) Improve the access of self-employed women to credit by encouraging the banking and financial system to modify procedures and institutional arrangements to meet the needs of self-employed women.

(ii) Encourage women's cooperatives for marketing and input procurement by promoting awareness, and providing training and networking facilities.

(iii) Facilitate access to information, technology and knowledge as well as to existing formal marketing networks in both the domestic and export sectors in order to ensure the viability of women's informal sector ventures.

(iv) Improve working conditions, provide social security and minimize the comparative isolation of women workers in the informal sector and home-based work by, among other things, extending the coverage of labour legislation to informal sector and home-based workers and fostering the development of networks among them.

(v) Promote entrepreneurial and management skills among women. Interventions that focus on women entrepreneurs rather than on enterprises are more strategic because they empower women and the benefits are less likely to be taken over by men.

(vi) To initiate a proposal for an ILO convention on the protection of the rights of home-based workers.

7. Women migrant workers

Strategic objective

To support and improve the economic and social welfare of women migrant workers by ensuring that internal and international female migrant workers are accorded full protection and appropriate remuneration through legal and

institutional actions as guided by human rights instruments and international labour standards.

Action to be taken

(i) Urge Governments to take into account international laws and human rights instruments, such as the 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, General Assembly resolution 48/110 of 20 December 1993 on violence against women migrant workers and ILO conventions and resolutions on migrant workers.

(ii) Urge the Governments of sending and receiving countries to establish bilateral agreements for minimum standards for worker protection, working conditions, standardized contracts, modes of conflict resolution and repatriation. Governments should also explore measures by mutual agreement to resolve the problems of illegal migrants and to ensure their humane treatment.

(iii) Employment contracts for migrant workers should be strictly enforced through government intervention, with regard to the obligations of the employers, recruitment agents and the migrant worker employees.

(iv) Establish mechanisms to assist migrant women workers in redressing the non-compliance of contracts with employers and to protect the women from social, sexual and economic exploitation.

(v) International associations of migrant female workers should be established with branches in all sending and receiving countries. These associations should serve to provide potential female migrants with realistic information on working and living conditions overseas and undertake advocacy to ensure that workers' legal rights are enforced.

(vi) Promote the involvement of non-governmental organizations to protect migrant women workers in matters of wages, working conditions, and harassment and abuse by employers and recruitment agents.

(vii) National development policies and plans should take into account the gender-differentiated impact of macro-policies and regional growth patterns on internal migration flows. Such policies and plans should promote equal access to productive assets and social services for migrant and native populations of both sexes.

8. Training and development

Strategic objective

To reduce the gender gap in training and development by ensuring women's equal access to opportunities to develop their skills in new technologies in order to compete on equal terms with men for better jobs and to prevent or minimize the impact of technological unemployment among women.

Action to be taken

(i) Encourage female students to study science and mathematics in schools and universities. Appoint women with appropriate scientific skills to senior policy-making positions in science and technology.

(ii) Promote women's participation in all areas of technical and vocational training and assist trained women in obtaining employment.

(iii) Provide women with equal access to on-the-job skills development and career advancement in the public as well as in the private sectors.

(iv) Enable women to benefit from and cope with the impact of new technologies by: developing and implementing appropriate skills training and retraining programmes for women in occupations and industries where new technologies are reducing the demand for labour; strengthening women's participation in labour relations; raising their awareness of technological change so that employers and workers can cooperate in the introduction of new technologies; and providing social protection for technologically unemployed women.

C. Recognizing women's role and concerns in environmental and natural resource management

Goal

To recognize and utilize the critical role and knowledge of women in environmental and natural resource management, and enhance awareness of their capacity to manage their environment.

1. Integration of women in environmental and natural resource management

Strategic objective

To integrate women's concerns and enhance women's participation in environment and natural resource management.

Action to be taken

(i) Involve women at all levels of the planning and implementation process to improve the environment, including the home and work environment.

(ii) Mobilize all sources of information to increase the potential of women to conserve and improve their environment.

(iii) Recognize women as active participants in national and international ecosystem management and the control of environmental degradation.

(iv) Promote equal opportunities for women to participate in wage-earning employment resulting from environmental preservation and upgrading programmes.

(v) Ensure that the ownership of intellectual property rights is adequately and effectively protected. Ensure, subject to national policies and legislation, that technology, knowledge and customary and traditional practices of local and indigenous people, including resource owners and custodians, are adequately and effectively protected and that they thereby benefit directly, on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms, from any utilization of such technologies, knowledge and practices or from any technological development directly derived therefrom.

2. Policies and planning for sustainable development

Strategic objective

To integrate women's concerns and women's perspectives into the design and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms at micro as well as macro levels, in rural and in urban areas.

Action to be taken

(i) Integrate the knowledge and experience of grass-roots women in the management of ecosystems into projects, programmes and policies for environmentally sustainable development by, among other things, including the involvement of knowledgeable women at all levels of policy-making.

(ii) Reflect the needs and perceptions of women in the formulation of programmes and development policies.

(iii) Ensure greater local autonomy and decentralization of power to local bodies for better utilization of local resources and ensure gender equity at the local levels to effect such utilization. Adequate public resources should be made available to local authorities for grass-roots action.

(iv) Increase development assistance to grass-roots women's organizations working in the field of the environment.

3. Shelter and settlement

Strategic objective

To meet women's needs for shelter and a clean environment.

Action to be taken

(i) Develop innovative programmes and appropriate technology to provide housing for the rural poor with special emphasis on meeting the needs of

female heads of households, destitute and abandoned women, and women in extreme poverty. In urban areas, integrate shelter and housing programmes for the urban poor with overall urbanization strategies. Special attention should be given to providing housing for migrant working women.

(ii) Ensure that all women and children have adequate shelter, including access to clean drinking water, by assisting rural women in constructing housing using appropriate and environmentally friendly technologies; integrate the housing needs of poor urban women into urban development strategies, paying particular regard to the effect of location on access to employment; involve poor and other women from target groups in the choice of location and design of housing in order to incorporate their needs for culturally appropriate and practical space for cooking and child care, and for access to fuel, water and work; undertake gender-sensitization for architects, urban planners and staff of public transport authorities; implement surveys to identify the transport needs of urban women, particularly those living in poverty, and the development of programmes to meet those needs; and develop special housing programmes for migrant, refugee and minority women.

(iii) Encourage gender-sensitive housing development policies that take into account the needs of women in the design and location of settlements, so that women's home management and reproductive activities, such as the procurement of water and fuel, cooking, cleaning and child-rearing, as well as their labour market activities, can be carried out.

(iv) Ensure that women have equal rights in the ownership of housing and that they are not discriminated against in the provision of housing finance.

(v) Give preferential treatment to women from families in extreme poverty, especially female heads of households, in government housing programmes.

(vi) Involve women in the planning and construction phases of community housing projects in order to ensure the provision of gender-sensitive housing.

D. Supporting equal access of women to power and decision-making

Strategic objective

To strengthen factors that promote the full and equal participation of women in power structures and decision-making at all levels and, where necessary, to reorient the focus, practices and assumptions of formal and informal institutions and to inspire women and men to work together for a more humane and peaceful society.

Action to be taken

International standards

(i) Governments are urged to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and withdraw substantive reservations to the Convention.

(ii) Governments are urged to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related conventions relevant to women's lives, and to implement these through legal, administrative and other reforms.

(iii) Governments should promote international conventions through community education, legal literacy programmes, legal aid and counselling.

Public life

(iv) Governments, citizens and political parties are encouraged to increase the percentage of women in legislative bodies and ministries, at senior levels of the civil service and in the judiciary, to at least 20 per cent by the year 2000, by using legislation and quotas where required to address structural impediments and by providing special assistance such as training and information.

(v) Governments are urged to recognize decentralization in decision-making as a necessary step towards ensuring increased participation by women.

(vi) Efforts should be made to ensure that women are equitably represented in all decision-making and advisory bodies by Governments, trade unions, chambers of commerce and industry and community groups by encouraging the availability of information on women qualified for appointment to senior decision-making, policy-making and advisory positions.

(vii) A wide range of means should be used to promote awareness of women's human rights and the importance of their full and equal participation in government, administration, the law, trade unions and employer groups and community groups.

(viii) Opportunities, including training, should be provided to young people to prepare themselves for their future leadership roles in this region.

Gender bias in the law

(ix) Legal systems should be made more accessible (especially to those who lack resources), to women, including through providing legal aid services, paralegal training and legal literacy programmes.

(x) Gender bias in the law should be eliminated by research, review and change in existing legislation and legal, judicial and court practices,

and by promoting awareness of gender bias in legal education and training and providing ongoing gender awareness programmes for members of the legal profession, magistrates, judges and other legal workers.

(xi) Family law should be reformed towards a common civil code upholding the dignity of women as equal partners with men in the family, including removing gender inequities in matters of divorce, custody and property rights, preferably where the initiative comes from the women in the concerned community.

(xii) Women should have an equal share of ownership and inheritance of property and land.

(xiii) Discrimination against women in matters of citizenship and nationality of spouses and children should be eliminated.

The family

(xiv) Increased sharing of roles and responsibilities within the family should be promoted through innovative media campaigns, school and community education programmes which emphasize gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family so that women may participate in public spheres and activities.

(xv) Family counselling centres may be promoted with non-governmental organization and community involvement and operated by trained personnel and with adequate financial support.

E. Protecting and promoting women's human rights

In order for there to be justice for men and women, both must be equal before the law. In some countries of the region, discriminatory laws exist in the areas of property rights, marriage, divorce and nationality. Women's rights being integral to the concept of human rights, non-discriminatory laws in all areas of public and private life need to be established to bring about basic equity on the basis of their constitutional rights.

1. Violence against women

Strategic objective

To ensure that violence against women in the public and private spheres is treated as a violation of women's human rights and as a community issue and that the causes of prostitution are eliminated, paying particular attention to eliminating child and forced prostitution.

Action to be taken

International standards

(i) Governments, intergovernmental bodies, other relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations should be urged to take all possible steps to eliminate violence against women in accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and other relevant United Nations instruments.

(ii) All Governments are urged to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, including the causes and consequences of such violence, in the performance of her tasks and duties and to furnish all information requested by her.

Law and enforcement

(iii) Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations should periodically analyse and review existing legislation relevant to violence against women with a view to ensuring its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women and, where such legislation does not already exist, Governments are urged to introduce legislation.

(iv) Governments, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to conduct research on enforcement and penalties on perpetrators of violence against women, review and amend legislation, including bail provisions, from the perspective that violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights and that protection of these rights should take precedence over protecting the civil liberties of the alleged violent offender.

(v) Governments should legislate to criminalize child abuse, including incest, rape and prostitution, and provide appropriate support services and counselling.

(vi) Governments should be encouraged to increase the number of female police officers with special training and deploy them in adequate numbers to deal within the criminal justice system with women subjected to violence.

Education and support

(vii) Undertake innovative and wide-ranging community education to raise awareness of the root cause of violence against women. Such measures could include conducting community education campaigns which promote non-violent attitudes, the criminal nature of violence against women and the unacceptability of violence against women.

(viii) Raise awareness of members of the judiciary, health professionals, members of the legal profession and police of the nature and dynamics of violence against women.

(ix) Governments should develop and provide, in consultation with non-governmental organizations, a comprehensive crisis response to the various manifestations of violence against women, including access to the courts, counselling, information on crisis and support services, provision of crisis intervention and trauma centres and emergency financial and accommodation assistance.

Other specific action

(x) Child prostitution and forced prostitution must be made illegal and heavy punishment imposed on traffickers and agents. Laws should be reformulated to shift the bias against prostitutes that currently exists in many countries.

(xi) Eradicate any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women subjected to violence and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary or cultural prejudices.

(xii) Governments should introduce policies, practices and legislation where required to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace and provide effective compliance mechanisms to enforce the treatment of such harassment as an offence.

(xiii) Adequate rehabilitation programmes should be designed to rehabilitate women rescued from commercialized prostitution rackets.

(xiv) Efforts should be made to change social norms that exonerate sexual double standards in allowing male sexual promiscuity while setting strict norms of morality for women.

(xv) Job opportunities for girls should be expanded in sectors other than the "entertainment" industry to allow young women greater options in earning their living.

2. Indigenous women

Strategic objective

To empower indigenous women so that they have opportunities and choice within the development process, on terms which enable them to preserve their cultural identity.

Action to be taken

(i) Involve indigenous women on all issues affecting them.

(ii) Pay special attention in the development process to factors such as land tenure, family and community structure, language and spiritual traditions which contribute to the cultural identity of indigenous women and their communities.

(iii) Ensure that indigenous women enjoy legal equality and protection on the same terms as all women in society, and are not discriminated against on the basis of their race.

(iv) Ensure that the rights of indigenous women over their ancestral domain be recognized and respected.

(v) Ensure that the indigenous and traditional know-how of women in agriculture be preserved and further developed.

3. Women under war and other conflict situations

Strategic objective

To ensure that the special protection and assistance needs of refugee and displaced women are taken into account adequately in the design of rehabilitation programmes.

Action to be taken

(i) Refugee and displaced women's concerns should be routinely integrated into planning, programming and processing in consultation with the women themselves. Activities aimed at promoting the rights of refugee women, including through the dissemination of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and their implementation, should be encouraged in close cooperation with refugee women, in all sectors of refugee programmes.

(ii) Refugee women, especially those vulnerable to sexual abuse, should be given special protection through appropriate strategies, including the proper design and location of camps, and the adequate staffing of such camps.

(iii) Female officials should be deployed in border areas and in refugee rehabilitation camps in adequate numbers to deal with the problems of refugee and displaced women.

(iv) Displaced women should be rehabilitated through proper training programmes that may help develop their productive potential and endow them with marketable skills.

(v) Governments are to be encouraged to consider closely the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, in conjunction with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on that Convention in considering refugee status for women who defy specific social mores of feminine propriety and who try to leave, or have left, their country of origin.

(vi) Governments are asked to strongly condemn the systematic rape of women in situations of armed conflict and war and to support calls for the perpetrators of such crimes to be punished.

(vii) Governments are asked to strongly condemn the systematic rape of women in situations of terrorism and to support calls for the perpetrators of such crimes to be punished.

F. Promoting women's equal access to health

1. Health

Strategic objective

To ensure that women's health needs in all stages of the life cycle are adequately articulated and properly met by the requisite provision of budgetary resources, legislative support and social and health-care reorientation; to eliminate female foeticide; and to make systematic and pernicious gender discrimination in the distribution of nutrition and health-care services among children in the family a violation of law; and to set targets for the reduction in maternal mortality and morbidity rates by the year 2000, as established by various United Nations conventions.

Action to be taken

(i) Formulate national health policies in which the concept of women's health is broadened to include all aspects of health, including maternal health, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive tract infections, nutrition and cancers, and menopausal and post-menopausal conditions, and through which women-centred services on all aspects of health care become available to women.

(ii) The "culture of silence" that prevents women from recognizing and articulating their health needs should be broken by consciousness-raising processes so that women become visible in health statistics and their health requirements are properly addressed.

(iii) Health and nutritional training should form an integral part of all adult literacy programmes and school curricula from the primary level.

(iv) The principle of gender equality in infant and child-care practices should be incorporated in all health educational programmes so that pervasive and callous gender discrimination in the provision of health care within the family can be eliminated. Existing United Nations documents that ensure women's participation and empowerment of both health care and nutrition should be fully enforced, such as the World Declaration on Nutrition and Plan of Action for Nutrition, adopted by the FAO/WHO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization) International Conference on Nutrition, held in Rome in 1992, the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding, adopted by a WHO/UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) meeting in 1990, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, adopted by WHO in 1981, and related documents that protect women from commercial pressures and influences.

(v) Health should be recognized as a basic human right and accorded high priority in budget allocations. Governments should formulate national health policies in which the concept of women's health is broadened to include all aspects of health, through which women-centred services on all aspects of health care become available to women.

(vi) Priority should be given to the delivery of appropriate, affordable and accessible primary health-care services, including safe motherhood services and disease control responsive to women's special health needs.

(vii) Adequate efforts should be made by protective legislation and other devices to minimize occupational health hazards for women workers to ensure universal coverage of health care.

(viii) National Governments should accord the highest priority to the design and implementation of culturally adequate, gender-sensitive HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and care programmes.

(ix) Privatization of health services should be discouraged inasmuch as it denies access of quality health care to all people and to women in particular.

(x) Rational drug policies should be adopted and the WHO essential drug list used as a basis for drug procurement and use.

(xi) Special attention should be given to the health and nutrition of the girl-child and to pregnant and lactating mothers.

(xii) Iron deficiency anaemia in women should be reduced by one third of the 1990 levels by the year 2000.

2. Population

Strategic objective

To ensure that women can exercise free and informed reproductive choices through the formulation of administrative guidelines, policies and programmes.

Action to be taken

(i) Legislative and social support should be ensured to prevent unwanted pregnancies, reduce the incidence of high-risk pregnancies and increase utilization of family planning by women and men.

(ii) Family planning programmes should work towards improving the quality of their services and helping couples and individuals meet their reproductive goals. Such goals should promote good health, respect the dignity of all persons and their right to choose the number and spacing of their children with adequate information on the safety and efficacy of their family planning method of choice, and ensure the accessibility of these services to all who need and want them.

(iii) National Governments should ensure the easy availability of safe methods at affordable prices.

(iv) All countries in the region with unacceptably high maternal mortality rates should set the target of bringing them down to one half of the 1990 level.

(v) Governments should aim to reduce the level of infant mortality to 40 per 1,000 live births or lower.

(vi) National Governments should ban sex determination tests for non-medical reasons and impose deterrent punishment for those who provide such services.

G. Supporting access to and equality of women in education and literacy

1. Education and literacy

Strategic objective

To accord the highest development priority to the problem of illiteracy among women so that all women may attain functional literacy as soon as possible, as well as to eliminate the gender gap in basic and functional literacy and gender discrimination and gender stereotyping in the content of education.

Action to be taken

(i) All countries, especially those with high levels of female illiteracy, should immediately set up national literacy missions and endow them with adequate resources in order to attain elimination of adult female illiteracy.

(ii) Local administrative structures as well as non-governmental organizations need to be involved integrally in these efforts. Adequate provision should be made for follow-up activities and in-built monitoring of the literacy programmes in order to ensure continuity of the process.

(iii) Consciousness-raising activities through the media should be carried out in innovative ways to generate enthusiasm for the goal of universal literacy.

(iv) Measures should be taken to ensure wide dispersal of educational facilities across geographical space at least up to the secondary level, so that access of all women living in remote and rural areas is fostered.

(v) Every attempt should be made to eliminate the depiction of gender-stereotyped roles for women through revision of syllabus and course content, consciousness-raising of teachers and parents, and innovative affirmative action programmes for girl students. Women's

induction in technical, scientific and other non-traditional fields should be actively promoted.

(vi) Government should take measures to promote (a) universal primary education; (b) equal participation in secondary education; and (c) increased access of girls and women to higher education.

(vii) Government education departments, including the national focal points for women in all countries of the region, should become actively involved in the task of revising the syllabus and course content of all school textbooks to ensure that such material does not reinforce traditional gender stereotyping of women's roles.

(viii) All schoolteachers from the primary level upwards should be made to undergo gender-sensitization training periodically in order to ensure that they transmit the right kind of gender messages to their pupils during their formative years.

(ix) Women should be encouraged to engage in non-traditional vocations and to attend non-traditional vocational training programmes.

(x) Gender studies should be promoted to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all levels of education and in all fields.

(xi) Career education programmes for women at all levels of education should be developed and provided.

(xii) Special literacy programmes to cater for the needs of women, especially rural women, should be promoted.

2. Science and technology

Strategic objective

To ensure that women's participation in the new areas of scientific and technological skills takes place on an equal footing with men and that the benefits of such technology become accessible to large segments of the women of the region, because while women contribute significantly to science and technology, they lack access to and control over technological and scientific skills and innovations.

Action to be taken

(i) Special affirmative action measures (including special scholarships) should be taken to promote the entry of young girls and women students into formal educational and vocational training institutes as well as private and public enterprises to pursue scientific and technical vocations, especially the newly emerging ones, on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Measures should be instituted to ensure that girls so trained can gain access to appropriate employment.

(ii) Efforts should be made to break down gender-stereotyped notions about scientific and technical expertise being primarily a prerogative of men through proper revision of syllabus and course contents, innovative use of the media and sensitization of parents and teachers.

(iii) Research and development should be encouraged in bringing the fields of scientific and technological knowledge into the design of affordable equipment that can reduce the drudgery of household work for the women of the region.

H. Portraying women positively in the media

Goal

To promote positive images of women in the media with a view to influencing, transforming and creating social environment policies affecting women, according women their rightful place in society as active and equal partners in development and enhancing women's dignity and self-image.

1. Communications technology

Strategic objective

To ensure that women enjoy greater access to all forms of communications technology, including the traditional and indigenous media, so that women become creators and producers and not merely recipients and consumers of media messages.

Action to be taken

(i) Governments and media organizations to create policies and projects that provide training and employment opportunities for women, especially in the use of new technologies.

(ii) Encourage the wider use of alternative media, especially by marginalized women, to allow them to give voice to their own issues and concerns.

(iii) Provide avenues by which alternative and mainstream media can reinforce each other's efforts in the positive portrayal of women.

2. Globalization of the media

Strategic objective

To ensure that the global media, while providing information, knowledge and entertainment across borders, also promote social change and equality between women and men without destroying the existing culture and prevailing values of receiving countries.

Action to be taken

(i) Strengthen efforts to link women at the national, regional and international levels, in mainstream and alternative media, to share experience, knowledge and strategies in addressing gender, environment and development issues in the media.

(ii) Governments should develop policies on communications to respond effectively to the influx of inappropriate media images from foreign sources.

(iii) Encourage and provide the means for the creative use of indigenous cultural forms in the media, especially at national and regional levels.

3. Stereotyping

Strategic objective

To change the gender orientation of the mainstream media and ensure the elimination of gender stereotyping in the portrayal of women in all forms of the mass media.

Action to be taken

(i) Encourage and subsidize media producers to create quality gender-sensitive media materials and provide the means for sharing such materials at the local and regional levels.

(ii) Provide gender-sensitivity training to media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of positive images of women in the media.

(iii) Popularize media-awareness training, especially in schools and communities, to build an audience base of discerning consumers who will recognize gender stereotypes in the media and demand quality media output.

(iv) Support media-monitoring efforts of women's and consumers' groups at national, regional and international levels, and take remedial measures to address their findings.

(v) Adopt more stringent and effective measures to implement existing legislation on pornography and create policies to curb the excessive use of violence in the media. While some countries have regulatory mechanisms for dealing with images of violence and sex, the area of gender sensitivity and portrayal of women in the media has been neglected.

4. The media and development

Strategic objective

To ensure that the true role and full range of women's contributions in development are reflected in the media.

Action to be taken

(i) Encourage the media to develop a gender perspective on all issues, particularly those that are not generally considered "women's issues" such as foreign debt, environment, science and technology, and sustainable development.

(ii) Develop a module on women in development for use in schools of communication and by professional associations.

(iii) National mechanisms on women in development should forge closer linkages with the media, providing journalists with the necessary gender orientation with which to view and analyse development issues.

5. Media ownership and decision-making

Strategic objective

To democratize access to and employment in the media, and participation in the decision-making processes of the media, by women and other marginalized groups.

Action to be taken

(i) Explore other ownership arrangements, such as cooperatives and consortia, and develop measures for preventing monopolization of the mass media by business and political interests.

(ii) To put in place career development plans in media organizations for young women through curriculum programmes and in-service training.

(iii) Encourage media houses to adopt preferential hiring policies targeted at women to ensure their equitable representation, especially in newsrooms and production offices. Establish guidelines and other mechanisms to ensure equality in remuneration and benefits, including family support systems for women in the media.

(iv) Ensure that women are better represented in decision-making positions in media houses by providing them with the necessary training and career opportunities, including assignments to cover fields other than those generally assigned to women journalists.

I. Creating adequate mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women

Goal

To strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

1. National machinery

Strategic objective

To define a clear mandate for national machineries and place them at the highest political level of government.

Action to be taken

(i) Provide adequate staff and resources and upgrade the positions.

(ii) Provide financial autonomy and direct international linkages with other national machineries and with the United Nations system in order to be independent.

(iii) Promote a global gender equality policy by monitoring other governmental institutions.

(iv) Integrate the concerns of national machineries at all levels and in all areas.

2. Gender analysis

Strategic objective

To encourage Governments to develop more effective tools for gender analysis.

Action to be taken

(i) Require government officials to apply these tools in developing policies and programmes.

(ii) Train all key personnel on gender analysis as a tool for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects.

(iii) The United Nations should assist countries by developing models for gender analysis of national policies and programmes.

(iv) Promote the employment of women in policy development and programme implementation institutions, especially for sustainable development.

3. Integration of gender concerns

Strategic objective

To strengthen the capacity of all government agencies to integrate gender concerns into their work.

Action to be taken

(i) Facilitate the active participation of and coordination with non-governmental organizations and agencies and institutions conducting research on women.

(ii) Ensure the close integration of women in advisory consultative bodies within national machineries.

4. Statistics

Strategic objective

To review and assess the adequacy of the coverage of gender issues in official statistical systems and to prepare a plan for needed improvements.

Action to be taken

(i) Produce a publication that presents and interprets topical data from a gender perspective suitable for a wide range of non-technical users.

(ii) At the international level, a new publication on the subject "The world's women and men" should be prepared.

(iii) Statistical offices at both international and national levels should develop methods and programmes to measure:

- Time use of men and women, especially all work and work-related activities, whether paid or unpaid;
- Informal sector and subsistence agriculture;
- Satellite accounts on the contributions of women and men;
- Roles of women and men in the family and in family planning;
- Domestic violence;
- Political and economic leadership;
- Wages, salaries and income.

J. Enhancing women's role in peace-building

Goal

To eliminate all obstacles to the full and equal participation of women at national, regional and international levels in peace-building and conflict resolution.

1. Participation in peace-building

Strategic objective

To ensure the full and equal participation of women at local, national, regional and international levels in conflict resolution.

Action to be taken

(i) Adequate representation of women should be ensured in peace-keeping activities and peace negotiations at all levels.

(ii) Women's views and women's perspectives should be reflected in all such activities and negotiations.

(iii) Governments are urged to integrate women's viewpoints and involve women in bilateral and multilateral discussions, particularly on the crucial issues of disarmament and reduction in defence expenditure; Governments are encouraged to consider reallocating military budgets to urgent social services.

(iv) Governments are urged to redefine security beyond the conventional concerns of national defence, thus possibly reducing military spending.

2. Education for peace

Strategic objective

To ensure that peace education is made an integral part of the socialization process within the family and in the society at large.

Action to be taken

(i) Reflect women's perspectives and involve women in the design of peace awareness and peace promotional programmes in the media, educational systems and the community.

(ii) Undertake measures to discourage the presentation of excessive violence in the mass media.

3. Peace research

Strategic objective

To increase understanding of the root causes of conflict situations and the potential role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution.

Action to be taken

(i) Encourage Governments to promote research on and establish institutions for the study of peace-building and conflict resolution.

(ii) Encourage researchers to undertake studies on the root causes of conflicts and the potential role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution.

(iii) Encourage networking and promote dialogue among peace researchers at national, regional and international levels.

V. ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A. Participation

74. Coordinated and complementary action is required from a number of different parties for the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific to contribute effectively to the advancement of women in the region; these include Governments, intergovernmental organizations, donor countries and agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.

75. First and most important is the role of participating member and associate member Governments. Participating Governments need to develop national plans of action for the advancement of women, where these do not already exist. Based on the proposals contained in the regional Plan of Action, national plans should contain fully operational programmes and projects reflecting national problems and priorities, as well as specific and measurable outcome indicators to facilitate monitoring and evaluation. Governments should ensure that appropriate institutional arrangements are mobilized or, where necessary, created to permit the full and effective discharge of their national responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of the Plan. Such arrangements will include incorporating the national plans of action for the advancement of women into the activities of national planning and executing bodies and national development coordinating mechanisms.

76. Multisectoral participation is essential because many of the most important developments required to advance the status and roles of women involve broad social and community institutions. Thus, Governments should encourage and facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public to formulate and execute the national plans of action for the advancement of women. Existing national women's machineries should be utilized and other procedures and arrangements established to ensure

the widest possible participation in the execution of national plans. The various sectors should be encouraged to modify existing programmes and actions, as well as develop new projects and activities in support of the advancement of women.

77. At the regional level, the participation of intergovernmental organizations is required to support national efforts. These include the United Nations bodies and agencies active in the region. These organizations should develop specific activities to support Governments in the implementation of national plans of action and promote regional cooperation for the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific. It is particularly important that intergovernmental organizations review ongoing programmes and projects at the national and regional levels to ensure that these are consistent with and contribute to the advancement of women.

78. Donor countries and agencies also have a vital role to play in supporting the Plan of Action and the implementation of national plans. In addition to providing financial and technical support for activities under the Plan, donors also need to review ongoing programmes and projects in all areas of development to ensure that they are consistent with and support the advancement of women.

79. It is urgent to develop suitable institutional mechanisms for regular and systematic interaction between Governments and non-governmental organizations, including community-based groups and trade unions. Such mechanisms shall be set up at all levels, with special emphasis on local-level mechanisms in which most women can participate effectively. Among the important roles of non-governmental organizations are the dissemination of information on the Plan, advocacy towards and participation in the formulation of the national plan of action, influencing implementation of national plans and supplementing State action at the local level, monitoring the implementation of the national plan and recommending improvements in Plan implementation.

B. Priorities

80. The Plan of Action is a strategic approach to the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific. Noting that many countries in the region have achieved considerable progress towards meeting women's practical needs, the Plan emphasizes the need also to address women's strategic gender interests. Thus, strategic gender-related objectives are identified for the key dimensions of each of the critical areas of concern under this Plan.

81. Within this overall framework, national priorities should be set by each country, taking into account national circumstances. Although, in the region as a whole, the promotion of women's strategic gender interests is likely to assume the highest priority, in some countries greater success in meeting women's practical needs may be an essential step before strategic gender interests can be advanced effectively. Even in those countries that have made the most progress in meeting basic needs, failure to meet the practical needs of particular groups of women may continue to obstruct efforts to advance their strategic gender interests.

82. At the national level, responsibility for setting priorities should be shared between agencies and organizations in both the public and private sectors, under the coordination of the national focal point for women. At the regional level, priority-setting should be the collective responsibility of the various United Nations agencies and bodies and other intergovernmental organizations participating in the implementation of the Plan.

C. Coordination

83. At the national level, coordination of the implementation of the present Plan of Action should be undertaken through a national focal point for women for the advancement of women. Where such a focal point does not already exist, Governments will need to establish a national focal point. This should be located at the highest possible policy-making level, and be given responsibility for formulating a national plan of action within the framework of the Plan of Action. The national focal point should be given the power and the resources necessary to promote the active participation of all sectors, including non-governmental organizations, other social and community groups and the private sector, in the implementation of the Plan.

84. At the regional level, under General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, ESCAP was directed to serve as the main general economic and social centre within the United Nations in the Asian and Pacific region. Therefore ESCAP has overall responsibility for coordinating regional measures in support of the implementation of the regional Plan of Action; its role includes the following:

(a) Assisting countries in the formulation and implementation of national plans and policies for the advancement of women;

(b) Providing training to enhance the skills of staff from government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations in areas covered by the Plan;

(c) Organizing research in relation to the advancement of women;

(d) Facilitating intraregional exchanges of experience and expertise;

(e) Disseminating regional information;

(f) Regularly monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Plan.

85. In order to promote regional cooperation in the implementation of the Plan, ESCAP should organize intergovernmental subregional meetings and periodic consultations among the national focal points. Owing to the important influence of culture on the position of women, subregional consultations will facilitate the exchange of experience and expertise among countries with similar social and cultural backgrounds. ESCAP should also convene meetings of senior officials occasionally to consider special issues related to the implementation of the Plan. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP is requested to seek the necessary funding for ESCAP to perform these tasks, and the United Nations system is likewise requested to review its funding allocations to ensure that such funds

are made available. In addition, ESCAP is encouraged to integrate appropriately the priorities of this Plan with the work programme of all divisions of ESCAP. The concerned bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations will also coordinate their various activities in support of the Plan to maximize its impact and optimize the utilization of resources.

D. Financial arrangements

86. Governments are encouraged to extend their utmost efforts to ensure that adequate budgetary, personnel and other resources are made available in order to ensure the effective implementation of national plans of action for the advancement of women.

87. Intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations bodies and agencies, should mobilize financial and technical resources as much as possible in support of the regional Plan of Action. Donor countries and agencies, development banks and intergovernmental funding organizations are urged to give the highest priority to allocating resources to support activities for the advancement of women under the Plan and to support the implementation of national plans of action. Noting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 20:20 compact on human development (i.e. 20 per cent of developing country budgets and 20 per cent of industrial country aid are allocated to human priority expenditure), donors are encouraged, after appropriate consultations with their respective partners, and taking into account women's participation and needs, to make efforts to increase the proportion of their official development assistance allocated to the social sector and especially to poverty alleviation. Donors are further encouraged to coordinate their efforts both to avoid duplication and to maximize the effectiveness of their resources. In prioritizing funding and technical assistance, donors should consider the needs of the least developed countries in the region and the poorer areas within each country.

E. Monitoring and evaluation

88. Participating Governments are encouraged to set targets and monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action on a regular basis, for which additional mechanisms should be created where necessary.

89. ESCAP should monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women through, among other things, the preparation of the "Statistical compendium on women in Asia and the Pacific". ESCAP should also provide technical assistance to member countries in developing output indicators of the advancement of women based on national priorities in order to monitor the implementation of national plans of action.

90. The ESCAP secretariat will report to the Commission at its fifty-first session, and at each session thereafter whenever necessary, on the status of the implementation of the Plan. The report will include a statistical report detailing the specific measurable targets for the advancement of women adopted by participating Governments in national plans of action for the advancement of women and on national progress in achieving those targets.